

Salisbury Rural Sanitary Authority.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1895.

AREA of the DISTRICT in ACRES, 55,665. POPULATION of the DISTRICT, CENSUS 1891, 12,894.
ESTIMATED POPULATION to the MIDDLE of 1895, 13,004.

GENTLEMEN—I beg to submit to you my Annual Report for 1895. The corrected number of deaths is 174, against 222 of 1894. The correction consists in adding 10 deaths which occurred outside the district (in the Salisbury Infirmary), and in deducting 49 deaths which occurred in the two Asylums and in the Work-house among persons not belonging to the district. This gives a death-rate of 13.3 against 14.3 for 1894. The infant mortality-rate is 1.9, or calculated on the births 93.7 per 1000, and the zymotic-rate is 0.3 per 1000.

Death-rate.

The following is a Table of comparison for the last four years:—

	1892	1893	1894	1895		1892	1893	1894	1895
Diphtheria ...	...	1	2	1	Diarrhoea ...	...	1	3	2
Scarlatina ...	1	4	...	...	Phthisis ...	19	19	14	20
Whooping Cough	6	...	1	...	Erysipelas ...	...	2	...	...
Croup ...	1	1	2	...	Heart Disease...	29	24	42	30
Continued Fevers	...	...	...	...	Bronchitis & Pneumonia	44	25	38	30
Measles ...	...	2	...	...	Injuries ...	2	2	4	4
Typhoid Fever ...	2	...	1	1					

Influenza has been the cause of eleven deaths, and Cancer of fourteen. These numbers are less than those of the previous year, and the cases seem pretty equally distributed throughout the district. Infectious disease, other than Influenza, is represented by a single case of Diphtheria.

The number of Births has been 283, against 300 for 1894; being at the rate of 22.1 per 1,000. The Births are therefore in excess of the Deaths by 114. In the Tables which accompany this Report there is really nothing calling for comment. Though Phthisis is higher than last year, and Heart Disease and Bronchitis lower, these are all fairly within the average.

Birth-rate.

The commencement of the year 1895 was marked by many changes in the *personnel* of the Sanitary Authority, the new District Council having taken over the duties of the Rural Guardians. Shortly afterwards, our old title of Alderbury Rural Sanitary Authority also ceased to exist. The question of an Infectious Hospital in conjunction with the Borough of Salisbury was considered. The Infectious Diseases Notification Act was also considered, and I regret that it was not adopted. In the end of November the Wilts County Council commenced a scheme for distributing information of outbreaks of Infectious Disease occurring throughout the County. Not being possessed of a Medical Officer, the County Council have required that any case or outbreak of Infectious Disease should be notified to their Clerk. I have not been able to afford them any information, but during the months of December and January I have received twenty-six notices of Infectious Disease occurring in various parts of the County. Eighteen of these have been Scarlet Fever, four Diphtheria, two Typhoid, and two Erysipelas. What the severity of the outbreak was in the majority of the notifications there was no means of judging.

Events of the Year.

The weather of Jaunary and February was probably colder than any within the recollection of even the oldest inhabitant. When March arrived the frost broke, and the public health which during the cold weather had been exceedingly good, now became exceedingly bad. The Death-rate for the week ending March 2nd was in London 33.5, and in Liverpool 55.5. This appears to have been largely due to an outbreak of Influenza. In this district it was exceedingly prevalent, but generally of a mild type. The deaths due to this cause have been already mentioned, and these were nearly all among persons well advanced in life. By the third week in March the weather had become exceedingly fine and mild, but this appeared only to increase the severity of the Influenza. The spring was an exceedingly fine one, and though the Influenza declined in April it re-appeared in May. The showery weather of July and August was followed by an exceptionally hot September, such temperatures as 87 in the shade being recorded, and the thermometer frequently registering 8 or 9 degrees above the average maximum for the month. Whether the weather has had anything to do with it or not, this has obviously been a healthy year.

Influenza and the Weather.

Scarlet Fever. Scarlet Fever is a disease not affected much by weather—probably not at all. The first case of Scarlet Fever brought to my notice was at West Harnham, in the month of August. The child had recently arrived from London and had no doubt contracted the disease there. One other case in the village, and two cases at Stratford Toney, were probably due to this importation. A case at West Dean was also imported from London, thus showing the danger, and the necessity of strict precautions, when children are being sent down regularly for the benefit of country air. Two mild cases occurred at the same time at Stratford-sub-Castle; the infection appeared to come from Longhedge Farm, and ultimately from Salisbury.

Typhoid. The only cases of Typhoid were one at No-man's-land and another at Alderbury; both cases came from a distance; the first case was fatal. Enquiries made in London, with regard to the first case, obtained the information that there had been other cases of Typhoid in the same street.

Diphtheria. The district appears to have been remarkably free from Diphtheria, one or two slight cases at Coombe, Stratford Toney, and Nunton, being all that have occurred.

Measles. Several outbreaks of Measles have occurred, and the number of children attacked has been considerable. The cases have not been serious, but it has been found necessary to close the schools, chiefly on account of the greatly reduced attendance.

Closure of Schools. The Schools at Downton and No-man's-land, which ought to have opened on September 9th after the holidays, were kept closed till the 16th. The School at Downton was again closed on September 30th for a fortnight. The School at Alderbury was closed on October 2nd, and remained so till November 2nd. The School at Redlynch was closed on December 16th, and re-opened after the Christmas holidays.

Sanitary Work and Improvements. The district has been thoroughly inspected by the Sanitary Inspector and myself, and many parts have been visited frequently. A Table is furnished by the Sanitary Inspector as required by the County Council. The matters which have specially come under my notice are:—

	Privies altered and repaired.	Drains cleared.	Pumps & Wells repaired.	New Wells constructed.	Insanitary Cot- tages Improved.	Over- crowding.
Coombe ...	4	2	1	...	...	...
Laverstock ...	1	1	...	...	...	...
West Harnham ...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Downton ...	4	...	5	2	...	...
Pitton ...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Whiteparish ...	...	...	1	1	...	...
Stratford-sub-Castle ...	...	1	1	...	...	...
Waterloo ...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Alderbury ...	1	...	...	...	3	...
Nunton and Odstock ...	...	...	...	1	...	1
Fairview ...	...	1	2	...	...	...
Fisherton ...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Winterslow ...	...	...	...	...	...	1

Water Supply. The Water Supply of the district has as usual received a great deal of time and attention. On the whole things are now pretty good. There are of course districts such as Alderbury and Winterslow where the sinking of wells is next to impossible; in the former because water cannot be got except in mere surface wells, and in the latter because it can only be reached at a great depth. The Water supply of Alderbury has been under consideration, and my report was to this effect:—"There is only one well proper, and this is in a low situation, and the use of it is restricted. The other sources of supply are shallow holes, viz., North Fields and Moor-well, and a doubtful hole near each of these. The first supplies sixteen cottages, and the second twenty. The other twelve cottages on the high road have strictly no supply, but Moor-well is perhaps the nearest. There is a well called Clark's-well, but it only supplies one cottage. The population of the village is 678. The possibility of sinking a deep well and raising the water by a windmill has been considered, but abandoned on the ground of expense."

In compliance with the request of the Stratford-sub-Castle Parish Council, a report was also made as to the water supply of that village. As this village lies quite in the valley of the Avon the wells are shallow, and are therefore not of extreme purity. Of the ten samples examined, I was not however compelled to class more than one of them as "indifferent." The usual complaint of the cottagers was that the water was hard. How this idea can have arisen I cannot understand. The greatest hardness met with was ten degrees of total hardness, and five degrees of permanent hardness, while most of the wells did not give more than four degrees of total hardness. These remarks as to hardness of well water apply also to Waterloo, though here some of the water was slightly harder, but was still below that of Salisbury town water, the total hardness of which is seventeen. During the severe frost the open wells were not affected, while many of those provided with pumps were rendered useless, and the people dependent on them were, like the ratepayers in Salisbury, put to considerable inconvenience. In the case of the seven cottages in Waterloo dependent on a pump, there was apparently no alternative but to dip from the river just below the sewage works. I hope that this bit of information will not be used as an argument against our contention that the sewage works are not all that they might be.

Remarks last year on the state of the River Avon called for a further report, and this was furnished to the County Council in November. My remarks were, I think, exceeding mild, and ought not to have offended anybody. Had I given free vent to my feelings on the matter it is just possible that a Local Government Board inquiry would have followed. The matter is really such a simple one that it is difficult to see how anyone can assert that there is no room for improvement. What has moved me so often to complain of the state of the river in this district has been the complaints received from persons residing on or near the banks. These persons complain that the water is frequently not fit to drink; that the banks are fouled by a dark deposit; and that in summer there is an offensive smell. Now there can be no doubt that under certain conditions, as the winter weather, the flooded state of the river, or even the temporary raising of certain hatches, a very great improvement takes place. This improvement cannot be better illustrated than by the fact that people at Downton sometimes prefer the river water to that of their shallow wells. At any time of the year the water is however far better at Downton than it is just below Salisbury. In the month of October much deposit could be seen at least as far as Alderbury Ferry. Samples of water taken here on November 1st, when the river was almost in flood, were sufficiently pure a boat's length from the shore, but at the bank were indifferent. Samples taken at Petersfinger were indifferent, while those taken below the Sewage Works were decidedly bad. There is no doubt that the river contains some sewage before it reaches Salisbury, but it is still more impossible to doubt that the organic matter passing out of the sewage works is the cause of the polluted state of the river. The methods adopted at the sewage works are not such as can be expected either to arrest the most important part of the organic matter, or to produce a manure of any value.

Surely this is a question worthy of consideration, and indeed this is the whole question. The only gleam of hope in this matter, which has hitherto seemed hopeless, is to be found in the extreme energy of the Parish Council of the district. Their hands are no doubt at present full, but they may be able before long to turn their attention to this dreary business.

The Milford Without Parish Council to whom I have just alluded, have for some time—in fact ever since they came into existence—been agitating for improvements in Fairview Terrace and Waterloo Gardens. In a letter addressed to the County Council they say:—"In neither case is there any adequate water supply or system of drainage, and in both cases the roads are in a state which may be fairly described as insanitary. . . . The District Council has been appealed to, and their Medical Officer's report accompanies. On the other hand the Parish Council are supported by Mr. Harcourt Coates, the Medical Officer for the City, as appears from the accompanying extracts from the 'Wilts County Mirror and Express' of February 5th and April 8th, 1893. This very fairly represents the present condition of affairs as will be seen by the documents accompanying this letter." Now what does this all mean? The Town Council and their Medical Officer certainly gave us some trouble three years ago, but still it is three years since they buried their hatchet, and they have loyally kept the peace since then. Are they now attacking us through this new Council, or are these latter playing the part of resurrectionists? Do, I say to them, leave that hatchet alone. If they are convinced that improvements are required, no one has any right to object to their moving in the matter, but to attempt to revive a controversy which had its day long before they were officially born, seems hardly likely to enlist that sympathy which they so evidently desire. Space will not allow a repetition of the reports furnished as to the condition of Milford Without, but a word of criticism on the complaints as to Fairview Terrace may perhaps be of use. "No adequate system" of water supply, etc., is in existence we are told. The word *adequate* means "fully sufficient for," "sufficient," "enough." Now this row of cottages is supplied by three deep wells in the chalk, and these wells are provided with excellent wheel pumps. The water is more than sufficient, and is always good. How then can it be said that there is no adequate water supply? The system of sewerage is that of cesspools, and is also adequate. To lay a sewer in urban fashion has been shown to be impossible, even if it were desirable. If any change were necessary, earth-closets would be the proper thing to substitute for the cesspools, and would certainly be more in character with a district, which in spite of its proximity to the Borough of Salisbury, is still essentially rural. If Fairview Terrace were one mile nearer to London, it would still be in the Parish of Milford Without, but would the cry then be for water-works and sewage-works? Is it not merely because a little water company happens to be close at hand that this determined attempt to construct a veritable *urbs in rure* is being made. Had the attention of the Parish Council been directed chiefly to Waterloo Gardens there would have been at least some reason in their complaint. The roadway in Waterloo has been terribly cut up by the laying of gas pipes, and by the traffic to the new steam flour mills. The increase of building and its effect on the water supply and system of sewerage is a matter now occupying the attention of the Sanitary Authority.

Very little remains to be said about the various parishes composing the Salisbury Rural District.

The largest parish in the district, and the only place deserving the name of town is Downton with a population of 3,430. A great deal of inspection work has been done here, and a certain amount of improvement has been effected. There was slight flooding in the autumn, but none of the inconvenience experienced in the previous year. The British School, which was in a somewhat insanitary state, has been re-placed by a most imposing building in which every attention has been paid to sanitary requirements. A large number of pigs have been kept on a piece of very wet ground close to the high-road; these have been a frequent cause of complaint, and ought certainly to be removed.

River Avon.

Fairview and the Parish Council.

The District in detail.
Downton.

Alderbury.
No-man's-land.

The question of the water supply of the village of Alderbury has entailed many visits to the neighbourhood. The village of No-man's-land being in a corner of Wiltshire, and not in Hampshire, is not technically in the New Forest, but is essentially forest in character. An attempt to examine some cows, the milk from which was thought to have caused illness, was frustrated by the cows being always lost in the forest when wanted. The difficulty of evicting a woman from a dangerous and ruinous cottage has been very great; she is believed still to haunt the ruins.

Dean.

The stream at Dean has been often referred to. Something has been done in the way of removing the mud. In September last the smell was very offensive.

Fisherton Without.

The new Parish of Fisherton Anger Without is merely the portion of the Parish of Fisherton which was always in the rural district. The estimated population is now 1,330, making this the second largest place in the district. The difficulty of disposing of waste and surface water at West End still frequently occurs, and has been before referred to as an illustration of the troubles of water laid on, or an "adequate supply," in a district where the sewerage system is that of cesspools.

Whiteparish.

The third village according to size is Whiteparish, with a population of 1,037. The water supply in this village might certainly be better in quantity. In many places it is necessary to go to a considerable depth before water can be obtained, but beyond this there appears to be no difficulty in providing more wells.

Other matters, such as overcrowding at Nunton, etc., have been noted in a table on the second page.

Water Analysis.

Twenty-seven samples of water have been examined, of which nineteen were found "good," six "indifferent," and two "bad."

Food and Drugs
Act.

The County Council called our attention to the Sale of Food and Drugs Act as long ago as May, 1892. The duty of carrying out this Act has I understand been taken from us, and is now undertaken by the Council themselves.

The absence of any outbreaks of infectious disease, or other matters specially calling for inquiry, is this year somewhat remarkable. Even lead-poisoning, a disease fairly common in this district, has not occurred this year.

The questions connected with water supply ought always to be of interest to a Medical Officer of Health, and no apology is required when, as in the present instance, they have occupied a considerable amount of space. When a water supply becomes contaminated, not by organic matter such as can be discovered by analysis, but by specific germs, the dangers of sewers and cesspools are made terribly evident. The inquiry recently held in the Isle of Wight is a most instructive lesson. The water supply is here, as throughout the Southern district, obtained from the chalk. To the chalk we must go for a public supply, and for a private one also unless we are content with a mere surface well. The chalk is perhaps the most popular of all supplies. When London or any large town requires a further supply of water, the chalk is the source generally preferred. The chalk is better than the new red sand-stone, and better than some of the gravels. The question is not only the radius which will be drained by a deep well, but how far this radius will be increased by much pumping. In chalk, which is not a very porous soil, the passage of water is much facilitated by fissures, and it has been found that 10½ ft. of depression in a well, due to pumping, will extend its influence to 600 feet.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, may I venture to make a suggestion to the Wilts County Council. The General Purposes Committee are constantly devising schemes for stimulating the energy of the various Medical Officers of Health. What would be the effect of supplying us with the Yellow Book issued annually by the Local Government Board? It contains much useful information, and varies in price; the last one however cost 13/4. No doubt a reduction could be obtained on taking a quantity. The book referred to is the Supplement to the Annual Report of Local Government Board, being the Report of the Medical Officer.

Appended are Tables of Cause of Death, Population, Births, and New Cases of Infectious Sickness.

I remain, Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,

JAMES KELLAND, M.B. Edin., D.P.H. Durham, &c.

SALISBURY, February 12th, 1896.

